

THE TIMES' DAILY SERIAL STORY.

BY ELIZABETH KENA

WHO?

Author of "The House Opposite."
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CHAPTER V (Continued).

CYRIL did not know what to answer. He had at first championed Lady Wilmerley because he had believed her to be his protegee, but now that it had been proved that she was not, why was he still convinced that she had in some way been a victim of her husband's cruelty? He had to acknowledge that beyond a vague distrust of his cousin he had not only no adequate reason, but he had no reason at all for his suspicion.

"You are mistaken," he said at last. "I am withholding nothing that could in any way assist you to unravel this mystery. I confess I neither liked nor trusted my cousin, but I had no special reason—it was simply a case of Dr. Fall. I know no more than you do of the treatment of her ladyship. But doesn't the choice of a Turk and a Spaniard as attendants on Lady Wilmerley seem to you open to criticism?"

"Not necessarily," Lord Wilmerley said. "The police can't tell you more than we know. Lord Wilmerley had spent the greater part of his life with Turks and Spaniards. It, therefore, seems to me quite natural that when it came to selecting guardians for her ladyship he should have chosen a man and a woman he had presumably known for some years—whose worth he had proved, whose fidelity he could rely on."

"That sounds plausible," agreed Cyril. "Still, I can't help thinking it very peculiar, to say the least, that Lady Wilmerley was not under a doctor's care."

"Her ladyship may have been too unbalanced to mingle with people, and yet not in a condition to require medical attention. Such cases are not uncommon."

"True, and yet I have a feeling that Douglas was right when he assumed that her ladyship was not insane. You discredit his testimony on the ground that he is an ignorant man. But if a man of sound common sense has the opportunity of observing a woman daily during three years it seems to me that his opinion cannot be lightly ignored. You never knew my cousin. Well, I did, and as I said before, I cannot cite one fact to justify my aversion. I cannot believe that he ever sacrificed himself for anyone, and am much more inclined to credit Douglas's suggestion that it was jealousy which led him to keep her ladyship in such strict seclusion. But why waste our time in idle conjectures when it is so easy to find out the truth. Those two doctors who saw her yesterday must be found. If they are men of good reputation, of course I shall accept their report as final."

"Very good, my lord; I will at once have an advertisement inserted in all the papers, asking them to communicate with us. If that does not fetch them, I shall employ other means of tracing them."

"Has Lady Upton, her ladyship's grandmother, been heard from?"

"She was wired this morning asking for further particulars. Mr. Twombly answered her, I believe."

"A slight pause ensued, during which Judson watched Cyril as if expecting him to speak."

"And you still have nothing to say to me, my lord?" The detective spoke with evident disappointment.

"No; what else should I have to say?" replied Cyril, with some surprise.

"That is, of course, for you to judge, my lord."

His meaning was unmistakable. Cyril flushed angrily. Was it possible that the man dared to doubt his word? Dared to disbelieve his positive assertion that he knew nothing whatever about the murder? The damnable—suddenly he remembered. He remembered the lies he had been so glibly telling all day. Why should anyone believe him in future? His ignorance was probably already stamped on his face.

"I have nothing more to say," replied Cyril in a strangled voice.

"That being the case, I'd better be off," said Judson, rising slowly from his chair.

"Where are you going now?"

"I can't quite tell, my lord. It is my intention to vanish, so to speak."

"Vanish?"

"Yes, my lord. I work best in the dark; but you will hear from me as soon as I have something definite to report."

"I hope you will be successful," said Cyril.

"Thank you; I've never failed so far in anything I have undertaken. I must, however, warn you, my lord, that investigations sometimes lead to conclusions which no one could have foreseen when they were started. I always make a point of reminding my employers of this possibility."

What the devil was the man driving at, thought Cyril; did he suspect him? At thought Cyril; that would be really too absurd! The man was an ass.

"I shall never quarrel with you for discovering the truth," said Cyril, drawing himself up to his full height and glaring fiercely down at the little grey man. Then, turning abruptly on his heel, he stalked indignantly out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

CHAPTER VI.
The Mysterious Maid.

"M" Cyril shook himself reluctantly awake.

"Sorry to disturb you, but this 'as just come," said Peter, holding out a tray on which lay an opened telegram. His expression was so tragic that Cyril started up and seized the message.

It was addressed to Peter Thompson, Geronimo Castle, Newhaven, and read: "Change for the better. Your presence necessary. STUART SMITH."

"Why, that is good news!" cried Cyril, greatly relieved. "What are you pulling such a long face for?"

"You call it good news that you haven't got rid of that young woman yet?" exclaimed Peter. "This Stuart Smith, whoever he may be, who is wiring you to come to 'er, think she's your wife, doesn't he? That was bad enough when you were just Mr. Crichon, but now it's just awful. A Lady Wilmerley can't be hid as a 14-year-old child, can he? Your pardon, Oh, it'll all be all right."

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"Come out, so it will, and you'll be 'ad up for bigamy, like as not!"

"Nonsense. As soon as the young lady recovers she will join her friends, and no one will be any the wiser."

Peter shook his head incredulously.

"Well, my lord, let's 'ope so. (But what answer am I to send to this telegram?) You can't leave the castle now. It would certainly be inconvenient."

"If you did, you'd be followed, my lord."

"What do you mean? The police can't be such fools as all that."

"Then the police, my lord; it's those men from the newspapers. The castle is full of them; they're nosing about everywhere; there's not one of us as hasn't been pestered with the fellows. It's what you are like, what are you doing, what have you done, and a lot more foolish questions hever since we set foot here yesterday afternoon. And 'we'll pay you well, they say. Of course, I've not opened my mouth to them, but they're that persistent they'll follow you to the end of the earth if you leave the castle unexpectedly."

"This was a complication that had not occurred to Cyril, and yet he felt he ought to do something. What was to be done? He couldn't abandon the girl. Suddenly Stuart Smith's stern face and uncompromising upper lip rose vividly before him. Even if he wished to do so, the doctor would never allow him to ignore his supposed wife.

If he did not answer her summons in person, Smith would certainly put the worst interpretation on his absence. He would argue that only a brute could neglect his wife when she lay so seriously ill, and the fact that the girl had been flogged would also be remembered against him. Dr. Smith was capable of taking drastic measures to force him into performing what he considered the latter's obvious duty.

Cyril did not know what to do. He had only a choice of evils. If he went he would surely be followed, and the girl's existence and hiding place discovered. That would be fatal not only to him, but to her, for she had feared detection above all things; why, he could not even surmise, he no longer even cared; but he had promised to protect her, and he meant to do so.

On the other hand, if he did not go, the risk of the doctor's public shaming of him would be his. It was by no means certain he would do so; and if he wrote Smith a diplomatic letter he might succeed in persuading him that it was best for the girl if he stayed away a day longer.

What was the thing to do. Hastily throwing on a dressing-gown, he sat down at the desk. It was a difficult letter to write, and he destroyed many sheets before he was finally satisfied. This was the result of his efforts:

"Dear Dr. Stuart Smith: I am infinitely relieved that your patient is better. As you addressed me by wire here, I gather that you know of the tragic occurrence which has kept me from your side. It is impossible for me to leave before the funeral without explaining my mission, and this I am loath to do, as I am more than ever anxious to keep her malady secret. Dr. Monet has always believed in the possibility of a cure, and as long as there is a chance of that, I am sure you will agree with me that I ought to make every sacrifice to protect her from gossip. If she did recover, and her illness became known, it would greatly handicap her in her new life. Having to stay away from her would be even more distressing to me than it is if I could flatter myself that my presence would have a good effect upon her. I am sure, however, that such would be the case."

"I shall return to London late tomorrow afternoon, and will telephone you immediately upon my arrival."

"I am sending this to a trustworthy servant who will bring me your answer. I am most anxious to hear what you think of my patient's condition mentally, as well as physically. I am sure she could not be in better hands."

Then Cyril hesitated. What should he sign himself? Thompson? No, he wished to inspire confidence—his own name would be better. So he wrote "Wilmerley."

It was the first time he had used his new signature, and he heartily wished it had not been appended to such a document.

"Now, Peter," he said, "you must take the next train to London and carry this to Dr. Stuart Smith. If he is not at the nursing home, telephone to his house and find out where he is. The letter must be delivered as soon as possible, and you are to wait for a reply. If the doctor asks you any questions, answer as briefly as possible in order to avoid comment, you had better let it be known that you are going up to town to do some shopping or me. Buy something—anything—I want you to call at the lodgings, and tell them we shall return tomorrow. If you are followed, which I can't believe you will be, this will allay suspicion. Take a taxi, and go as fast as soon as possible. Don't drive directly to the home. You may mention to the doctor."

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for that I am extremely anxious about Mrs. Thompson."

"Very good, my lord."

"Throw the sheets I have scribbled on into the fire, and the blotting paper as well," ordered Cyril.

He felt rather proud of having thought of this detail. With detectives and pressmen prowling around, he must run no risks. It was with a very perturbed mind that Cyril finally went down to breakfast.

"Mrs. Everley would like to speak to you, my lord, as soon as convenient," said Douglas, as his master rose from the table. Cyril fancied he detected gleams of supposed excitement in the butler's eye.

"I'll see her at once," Cyril answered. A stout, respectable-looking woman hesitated in the doorway.

"Come in, Mrs. Everley," cried Cyril. "I'm glad to see you again; I've never forgotten you or your doughnuts."

The butler's face broke into a pleased smile as the woman dropped a curtsy. "It's very kind of you to remember them, my lord, very kind indeed, and glad I am to see you again." The smile vanished. "This is a terrible business, my lord."

"Terrible," assented Cyril.

"His poor lordship! Mrs. Valdigreux has said for months and months that something like this was sure to happen some day."

"Do you mean to say that she

prophesied that her ladyship would kill his lordship?" exclaimed Cyril.

"Yes, my lord, indeed she did! It made me feel that queer when it really happened."

"I should think so. It's most extraordinary."

"But begging your pardon, my lord, there is something special as made me ask to speak to you. Something I

thought you ought to know immediately."

"What is it?" Cyril had felt that some new trouble was brewing.

"One of the servants has disappeared, my lord."

"Disappeared? How—when?"

"Perhaps I'm making too much of it, but this murder has that upset me that I'm afraid of my own shadow, and I

says to myself, says I, 'Don't wait; go and tell his lordship at once, and he'll know whether it is important or not.'"

"You did perfectly right. But who has disappeared?"

A Continuation of This Story Will Be Found in Tomorrow's Issue of The Times.

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